



ISSUE 2 VOLUME 1  
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Happy New Year  
By: William E. Robblets

Not only is the New Year upon us but is also the beginning of a new Decade and a lot of new changes for Safe Haven to start the coming "Baby" season. There is a brand new nursery that will soon open with plenty of room to care for the precious babies. This is still only temporary until Safe Haven can get a place of its own which has been the agenda since the beginning. Happy New Year with wishes for a happy, safe and prosperous New Year for all.



Early Photos of the Safe Haven Nursery taken Spring 2009.



Interior view of the new nursery taken Fall 2009

# Helping pet squirrels become wild again

By: Mary Piffin

Baby squirrels are the sweetest and cutest things you have probably ever seen. They are so gentle, cuddly and adorable as babies. It's basic human instinct to want to care for such a cute little baby. It's also lots of fun to play with them as babies just like it's fun to play with puppies and kittens. The only problem is when these babies get older, they are not as tame as dogs and cats which have been bred for tameness for centuries. These babies are wild animals with wild instincts. They have been bred to be wild, the opposite of tame, for their own survival.

When squirrels are only six weeks old, it's cute when they climb up your pant leg, sit on your shoulder, wrestle with your hand, try to nibble on your ear lobe. When they are six months old it's a completely different story. Their gentle nibbles turn to painful bites when their teeth are fully grown. When they climb up your pant leg they can leave you bleeding with their now long and sharp claws. They are very smart and need a lot of attention. If you don't give them what they want, they will bite and scratch you because they had no mom to teach them manners. When they become sexually mature they can become even more aggressive, possessive and jealous. They will attack everyone except the main caregiver or maybe even just everyone. This is the time when people generally send them packing by throwing them out the back door. They've had their fun with the cute baby but do not like the wild adult they have become. This is a sure death sentence for them. They will also instantly become a menace to yourself and your neighbors when they get mad and try to physically demand attention. An unsuspecting person will try to kill a squirrel that jumps on him and bites him.

When they are babies, they have not yet been taught how to properly fear humans and pets so of course they will crave your loving attention. They must fear humans and pets for their own protection and survival. They also must learn how to socialize, communicate and relate to other squirrels or they will be killed by the dominant squirrel in the territory. They must know how to run from cats and dogs so they won't be attacked. They must know not to climb up strangers legs begging for food because that stranger may kill them out of fear. They must learn how to build a nest in a tree and not in someone's attic or on the ground or they will be killed. They must learn how to forage for food on their own or they may starve without handouts.

First and foremost, the best thing to do for the squirrel, rehabber and finder, is to turn over a baby squirrel to a licensed rehabber as soon as possible. It is incredibly stressful and confusing for the squirrel to go from being a pet to being wild. He would be much happier and better adjusted if he were raised to be wild from the beginning. Of course if you are reading this, you didn't get the baby to a rehabber and now you have a wild maturing squirrel on your hands. Below I shall outline the process that I use to get pet squirrels wild and ready for release back to nature. I have had to do this quite a few times each season because people either had no idea how wild adult squirrels can get or they just wanted to have their fun with the baby then toss him outside if/WHEN he gets mean.

1. Start to wean the squirrel off human contact. You can't just stop playing with the squirrel instantly and throw him outside. He will be frightened, confused, angry, sad, stressed out and ill equipped to deal with other squirrels and nature. I start by putting him in a large indoor cage at least 2'x2'x4' tall. I will let him come out and hang out with me for a couple of hours a day. Make sure the room is baby proof. You don't want him chewing on wires, falling out screen windows... If you don't have a safe room, you will need a bigger cage, 3'x3'x6'. I will play with him and love him in the same manner he was cared for before. Each day I spend less and less time with him. If he starts pacing, loses weight, exhibits self destructive behavior, chews on the cage bars, pulls or scratches his fur out or stops eating, I will play with him a little more and wean him more slowly.

2. Give him lots of fun things to do. I give them tons of toys, great things to eat and a stuffed animal so he can

wrestle with it. Parrot toys, ferret toys, hammocks, hanging toys, wood to chew on, nesting material, a regular squirrel nest box, real tree branches, lots of levels in his cage, pine cones, acorns... Of course, nutrition is also very important. He needs proper nutrition so he can feel good physically and psychologically. I will give 50% rodent blocks then fruits, vegetables and a few nuts and seeds after they've eaten their meals. They need to have a nice glossy coat, shiny eyes and well developed musculature. Your squirrel needs to be climbing up and down the cage, hanging upside down, climbing upside down and jumping.

3. Make sure he is around other squirrels. I will have other squirrels in cages right next to him so he can hear, see and smell other squirrels. He will get used to other squirrels and hopefully eventually realize that he is also a squirrel and not a human baby. If he is young enough, say 4 months of age, I will place a younger extremely laid back squirrel in with him. I start off by having the squirrel in a cage directly next to his cage for a few days. I of course sit there and watch them like a hawk so no one gets hurt. Sometimes I will have to put him and the other squirrel both into another cage at the same time so they don't have territory issues. If they can get along, I leave them together. If they try to hurt each other, I separate them back into side by side cages. If they're 4 months or younger, this generally works. Then the more wild squirrel will teach the tame one social skills, how to build a nest and how to play. I can then just take these squirrels to the prerelease cage together to get fully wild and they should be okay. If he doesn't get along with another younger squirrel, just keep him near other squirrels and continue reading below.

4. Start to take him outdoors. I would take his cage outdoors for a few hours a day weather permitting. I would continue this for a week or so, so he can get used to the sounds, smells and sights of the outdoors. If you are feeding squirrels or other wildlife in your backyard, you can continue to feed them for a few days so your squirrel can see them and learn a little fear. They will probably bark at him which should scare him. He needs to learn to fear the dominant adults. If you are going to release your squirrel to your yard, you don't want lots of other large dominant adult squirrels out there. They can and will kill your squirrel with one good bite to the back. After a few days, stop feeding all animals in your yard. You need the neighborhood animals to realize that they shouldn't come to your yard for a while. Even without food they'll keep checking your yard for a week or so.

5. Leave his cage outdoors 24 hours a day. Be sure to put some weather, rain, sun protection over the top. Put his cage far away from the sights of humans and domestic pets. Only go out there to feed, water and clean his cage. Don't hand feed him through the bars. I use a feeding door so they can't escape and I don't have to go inside. Again, if he paces, stops eating, loses weight, interact with him a little then wean him off human contact again. Make sure he has tons of fun things to eat and play with so he won't miss you. Introduce natural foods to him that he will find in the wild. Give him pine cones, acorns, roses. Make sure he has natural trees to climb in his cage. Make sure his cage is as tall as you can get, 6' is great. Give him natural nesting material and fabric so he can learn to place them in his nest box. Scatter his natural food on the floor for him to find. Place water in a bowl. Don't use a bottle anymore. (Don't you wish you just gave him to a rehabber in the first place now?)

6. Negative training if needed. Hopefully by now he will fear you a little bit when you go out to feed him. Hopefully he won't still run to the front of the cage to get close to you. Hopefully when you clean his cage he won't jump all over you and try to cuddle. If he does, it's time for some negative reinforcement. Get a squirt gun. Whenever he rushes to you when you go to his cage, squirt him and say NO real loud. If he jumps on you when you clean his cage, do the same thing. If he jumps on you, firmly remove him while saying NO. Be loud when you clean his cage. Don't speak nicely to him. This is for his own good. If he jumps on a stranger, they could kill him.

7a. Release in a yard. By now your squirrel should know how to make a nest, forage for food in his cage and fear you a little. It's time to release him to your yard. You can start by leaving the cage door open in the daytime. Stay out of your yard and away from him when he's out. You can watch him through a window. At night he'll probably go back to his nest box. You can lock him in at night if he would be safer from other animals. In a week or so, he may just leave his cage permanently. You can place another nest box or his own nest box up a tree or on a post near his cage.

Make sure it's at least 8' high and has protection from the rain. Make sure the hole is facing south so he has wind protection.

7b. Release away from humans. Well, you tried but it didn't quite work out. He can build a nest, forage for food and is frightened of other animals but he still wants to jump on you. You will have to release him away from humans. Go into his cage and scare him into his nest box. Put wire mesh over the hole. Wire this to the box. Remove the box from the cage and it's time for a road trip. You need to go at least a mile away from humans. Make sure your site has water, natural food, tall trees, good nesting areas and limited predators. There need to be a few squirrels but not too many. Bring a ladder and wire his nest box as high up a tree as you can, at least 8'. He will use this as a temporary home. You can scatter a little bit of food around the base of the tree. If there are predators in the area, you might want to make a secondary exit hole in his box so he can flee if say a raccoon sticks his paw into his nestbox.

7c. Total failure. Your squirrel can't build a nest, can't forage for food, isn't afraid of other animals and wants to climb on humans. Maybe he even has metabolic bone disease because you didn't give him proper nutrition as a baby. It's a total failure. It's illegal to keep a pet squirrel in most states without a license or permit. If he is definitely not releasable, you need to find a rehabber who will use him for educational purposes. Most rehabbers have more ex-pet squirrels that they can take so this will be tough. If you can't find him a legal home, you will have to euthanize him for his own good, yours and the publics. He will not be happy as a wild pet. You and your family will not be happy with an animal they fear in their home. You can't just throw him out the back door because he will jump on a neighbor and that person will kill him. Euthanization is the only merciful thing to do. I personally have never had to do this but I know some rehabbers who have when people raised pet squirrels that were totally spoiled, neurotic, unhealthy and mean.

Hopefully you are reading this when the squirrel is still a baby. Hopefully you will now be convinced to take him to a rehabber so he can be raised and released properly. You and the squirrel will be much happier. It also is a great lesson to teach your children and a wonderful happy story to tell to all your friends. You saved a baby squirrel and took him to a place to get proper care so he could be released back to the wild to live a happy life.

Below are a few real stories about people who kept baby squirrels.

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A man found a baby squirrel. He called around and found a woman who knew about squirrels who was not a Fish & Game licensed wildlife rehabilitator. She told him to raise the baby himself and keep it as a pet because the "outside world is not safe enough for squirrels." He did this but when the squirrel got to six months of age it was not as manageable. He chewed all the furniture, peed all over the house, shredded the drapes, would give hard "love bites," would accidentally claw people while climbing them and make them bleed and he terrorized the cat and dog. He would jump on and bite everyone except his main caretaker so people could never go into the room where he was kept. If his main caretaker was gone all day, he would bite him instantly when he got home. If his caretaker ignored him and threw him in his cage, he rubbed his head on the bars making himself bleed. He would also pace his cage and chew on the bars. The sound drove his caretaker crazy so he threw him out the back door.

The squirrel instantly started terrorizing the neighbors, jumping on them, biting, barking, charging. He chewed up someone's wood patio furniture, he ate everything in the bird feeder and destroyed the feeder, he dug up the plants looking for food, he attacked a small dog repeatedly. The neighbors started making calls and found me saying they had a rabid squirrel in their yard. Other neighbors wanted to kill it. One tried to kill it with a broom. I went and questioned the neighbors, found out someone raised it. The caretaker begged me to take it away from there before it got killed. By now it was injured from the broom incident so I trapped it, deprogrammed it and released it away from humans.

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There is a licensed Fish & Game rehabber in Southern California. He had cancer and was going through chemotherapy so he had to stay home a lot. He found a squirrel and cared for it. He took care of it and played with it for the six months that he was going through chemotherapy. He said the little squirrel helped him get through the treatments. When he felt better he went back to doing what he was doing and was gone from the house a lot. His little buddy didn't like this. He would get bored and destructive when his caretaker was gone. He chewed on an antique table. The licensed wildlife rehabilitator came home and saw this and euthanized him. He told everyone that the squirrel was very unhappy being locked up in a cage all day long so he euthanized him to stop his misery.

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A couple found a baby squirrel and raised it to five months of age. They were considering keeping it for life and were going to buy a huge cage to put on their patio. The squirrel's love bites were hurting more each day. They'd have to wear thick sweats and jeans around him because he jumped on everyone and would accidentally make them bleed with his claws. He started charging anyone who approached his cage and would bark but they could still easily pick him up. They started wondering if he was happy because he paced in his cage a lot and did odd repetitive motions. He was starting to lose weight so they contacted me about his diet. I gave them diet suggestions. I also suggested that part of his behavior issues may be psychological. He was starting to feel his wild oats. They thought about it for another week and kept calling me. Then he bit one of this kids all the way down to the bone on the finger. They brought him over.

I put him through the deprogramming process. Fortunately he was only five months old. Any older and it's a lot more difficult. I had to slowly wean him off human contact. The first few days were fine but then he started pacing, rubbing his head and not eating as much. I gave him more love. He was still confused, sad and a little depressed. I slowly introduced a young squirrel to him. They were in the same cage but in separate nest boxes. After a few days they started to play, then they started to sleep together. The little girl squirrel showed him how to build a nest. In a few more days he would rather play with her than with me. They both went to the big outdoor cage together and he was released a month after that back to the yard where he was found. The finders get to watch him run around the yard happy as can be. They feel good that they saved his life, got him the proper care and helped him become a well adjusted wild squirrel.

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Mary Piffin

# WHAT GOOD IS WILDLIFE REHABILITATION?

By: Louise Shimmel  
Executive Director Cascades Raptor Center

Some years ago, I had a discussion with a woman in the Public Relations department of the US Forest Service. She told me she was a little envious of the work that we do because it was so “white hat” - i.e., non-controversial, seen as good and important work by all. Hah! Although I can appreciate the difference between public perceptions of wildlife rehabilitation and the Forest Service (hounded by the “big government” image and bound to upset one interest group or another with many of its decisions), our work is not universally supported. Ironically, the nay-sayers are often conservationists and biologists.

Although I have come up against this issue several times in the past, it surfaced for me most recently when I was interviewed for a couple of articles. One for Horizon Air’s in-flight magazine was about raptors and rehabilitation in the Northwest; one was for a Cornell University newsletter on the pros and cons of wildlife rehabilitation. Questioning the value of a person’s life work is likely to raise some hackles, and it definitely did mine!

Locally, we rehabilitators are quite lucky to have an excellent relationship with the conservation groups in the area (an especially close one with Lane County Audubon). Biologists from the federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Forest Service), even the State Police and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, have many, many times transported birds from all over the county to rehabilitators. The Corps and Forest Service have both helped us more than once return or foster young in wild nests - climbing trees, building nest platforms, even climbing a ladder balanced in a boat...! CRC bands its released birds courtesy of BLM, we occasionally get fish from the ODFW hatcheries, and other food from the State Police evidence locker after the prosecution of a poaching case. We do campground presentations and participate in other educational events for the Forest Service, which has also awarded us a grant for our education programs in each of the last seven years.

The fact that this mutual respect and cooperation were not universal, however, was brought home to me one spring when I attended a breakfast meeting of biologists working for various agencies. I was asking for assistance finding a great horned owl nest into which to foster a young orphan. Whew! Although many were receptive, one at least was quite vocally opposed: because (1) great horned owls were common birds that have caused problems with other, less common species such as spotted owls and peregrine falcons; (2) he insisted climbing to a nest for such a reason would be illegal, constituting harassment under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and (3) wildlife rehabilitation was a waste of time and resources anyway.

In a subsequent one-on-one discussion, I assured him that US Fish & Wildlife has said that fostering is a legitimate reason for bothering nesting birds. (Biologists “bother” nests all the time, mind you, to monitor, count, band, check food remains, etc., but that’s “science,” and rehabilitation is not -- science serving a “greater” good somehow.) When pressed on the “common species” argument, the biologist admitted that he could see the value of rehabilitation for species such as spotted owls or goshawks but considered our time wasted working with red-tailed hawks, screech owls, and others whose populations are doing fine in the human-altered landscape. I pointed out that I would be unlikely to have a fully-functioning wildlife facility for the one goshawk that has been found locally in 15 years, if I weren’t also working with the more common species. Nor would I have the experience to address the problems the rare ones might have, if I hadn’t worked with hundreds of others. It’s also unlikely that a member of the public finding an injured goshawk or peregrine falcon would know we existed, if we weren’t also there for the sharp-shinned hawks or kestrels hitting their window.

This “specism,” however, is only one aspect of the argument against wildlife rehabilitation on the part of some members of the scientific community. Another is the concern that we are working with individual animals, having

either no impact on the species' population as a whole (yet utilizing resources that would be better spent protecting habitat or population research) or, worse, having a negative impact by potentially returning to the wild an individual that "natural selection" was removing as unfit. Well, even a non-"ologist" such as I can tell you that they can't have it both ways. Either rehabilitation has no impact because we are primarily working with species whose population is so large that whether all the rehabilitated individuals lived or died would make no statistically significant difference OR we have as much chance of making a positive impact as a negative one. Personally, I and most rehabilitators would agree that even the millions of animals with which we have collectively worked probably have made no statistically measurable impact on most species. Of course, I do have a friend in Arizona who rehabilitated one of the California condors recently released at the Grand Canyon...!

**Rehabilitators have made a difference to millions of individual animals**, however -- why is that not important? The ultimate specism, of course, is anthropocentrism ("considering human beings as the most significant entity of the universe," according to my very old Websters Collegiate Dictionary.) Despite the vast overpopulation of humans these days, any of us would stop to help a child injured beside the road.

**Why not the raccoon, squirrel, hawk or eagle?**

To me, the fact that so many humans care about injured or orphaned wildlife is what pulls me out of the depression I fall into whenever I consider the fact that our own population has just passed the six billion mark. Which takes me to one of the strongest arguments for wildlife rehabilitation, in my opinion: the very fact that rehabilitators and rehabilitation facilities exist is an affirmation to members of the public finding an injured animal that caring about wildlife is appropriate. Most state wildlife agencies cannot respond to the public's demand that injured wildlife be helped; in fact, there are many instances where a wildlife agency's response is to kill an animal that might otherwise be saved. That, in turn, does no good for the agency's public image and is probably one of the reasons rehabilitation is tolerated; few agencies embrace it fully, though this is changing. We have made definite strides towards being considered partners in conservation.

This fact is not at all restricted to the United States, North America, or even the developed countries. Being on the Internet, I get e-mail from all over the world. **My favorite recent case was an architect in Turkey who found an injured sparrowhawk** (an accipiter like our sharp-shinned hawk, not known for its easy care in captivity). He took photographs and sent them electronically so I could identify the bird; I did my part for Greco-Turkish relations by introducing him, via e-mail, to a rehabilitator in Greece more familiar with the indigenous species; on our advice, the architect constructed appropriate short-term housing to protect feathers and feet, found live food (quail) for the bird in the markets of Istanbul and got him, finally, to eat. Between the three of us we got that bird successfully rehabilitated and released! There is also wildlife rehabilitation going on in Mexico and Belize, Thailand and throughout Africa.

There are people everywhere who care about their native animals. Thanks to the Internet, these people no longer have to work in isolation, re-inventing the wheel with each new species or type of injury they see. The Turkish architect plans to spend his vacation at the rehabilitation facility in Greece, to learn more. If he has the interest and time to establish a rehabilitation effort in Turkey, it will spread. Spreading conservation values will help decrease incidents like his, where he had to convince the grocer whose window the sparrowhawk hit not to keep or sell the bird as a pet. In Greece, education of children has become a priority, involving whole schools, even villages, in the release of birds found nearby, so that the next generation will be less likely to shoot the many birds that come through on migration.

**Wildlife rehabilitators are also in a prime position to monitor circumstances that might evade the scientific community:** for example, a rehabilitator in Connecticut turned in the first confirmed case of West Nile Virus in the state. West Nile Virus is a zoonotic disease which has been recently documented for the first time in the Western Hemisphere; it is spread by mosquitoes and effects birds as well as people. The virus has been

concentrating in New York, and has so far affected 17 different bird species, as well as causing an encephalitis in humans. Scientists have expressed a great deal of concern that birds migrating through New York could spread the virus down south, where mosquitoes are active longer. Rehabilitators can help monitor this, if appropriately informed. *[This article was first written in 2000 - West Nile Virus is now, at the end of 2004, found throughout most of North America, the Caribbean, and points south.]*

After an initial panic on the part of public health authorities, **rehabilitators have been responsible for helping to slow the spread of rabies in the epizootic outbreak** in the Middle Atlantic states. Rehabilitators have been whistle-blowers in flagrant violations of the **Migratory Bird Treaty Act** by identifying large numbers of gunshot or poisoning victims coming from a specific area. **Rehabilitators have been instrumental in getting lead shot banned at federal wildlife refuges**, due to the high number of lead poisoned waterfowl and raptors that were coming in for help. Locally, rehabilitators **help contain the cyclical outbreak of canine distemper** in the raccoon population, which also affects fox and coyotes, weasels and mink, and, obviously, domestic dogs. Rehabilitators are uniquely positioned to monitor and report new and continuing outbreaks in diseases, such as Coot and Eagle Brain Lesion Syndrome (vacuolar myelinopathy), avian cholera, and botulism. Rehabilitators providing information on non-target victims of products such as Rid-a-Bird have resulted in the product being outlawed in most states.

Certainly saving habitat and other large scale efforts should continue to be high priority. However, equally important is showing the public what they can do as individuals. Sometimes the global situation can be so disheartening that providing small individual, local actions can help keep apathy at bay. Creating backyard habitat with native plants that produce food and shelter for wildlife, keeping cats inside and dogs on leashes, avoiding the use of barbed wire or making it more visible, making windows safer for birds, eliminating the use of pesticides or herbicides, restricting pruning and landscaping to the non-nesting season ... there are many individual actions that can be taken that add up to respecting the needs of, leaving room for, and learning to live with wildlife. We also, obviously, encourage saving individual birds that hit the window or animals that are found beside the road by taking them to a licensed rehabilitator. People taking these steps will naturally care about the wider spaces, the bigger picture because they have seen the value of it in their own backyard; they have had the privilege of saving that baby squirrel, or seeing that owl return to the wild. Certainly, rehabilitators are not alone in fostering this “think globally, act locally” attitude toward habitat and wildlife. However, for people who do not subscribe to birding or conservation magazines, the local rehabilitator is an important resource.

By the way, the only objection to wildlife rehabilitation I have heard addressed by the general public was a concern that we were “interfering with nature” or that we should “let nature take its course.” They are perhaps thinking we are out there rescuing the antelope from the cheetah or the squirrel from the hawk -- the nature “red in tooth and claw” that they see on nature documentaries. The truth is we very rarely see animals injured in a natural predator/prey situation unless a human intervenes, which we definitely don’t encourage. We almost always have to euthanize the victim of such an attack because of the severity of its injuries; thus the “savior” has probably caused the death of two animals, since the predator now has to go catch another one!

Yes, we may occasionally rescue a naive young predator who just does not yet have it together and is simply starving. For these, we are providing a second chance --but if they are truly genetically weaker, a second chance is probably not enough to keep them in the gene pool long enough to contaminate it.

For the most part, the vast majority of animals finding their way to rehabilitators have been injured or orphaned because of human-related problems. What rehabilitators are doing, most of the time, is trying to redress problems caused by humans and our lifestyle -- our cars, windows, power lines, traps, fishing line... our thoughtlessness or carelessness or failure to consider the impact of our actions on the other 99% of the earth’s inhabitants. Those who think eagles should “learn” to discriminate against perching on power poles, for example, or stop hunting beside

the road, should remember that such natural selection may take aeons. It doesn't have much of a chance of working when humans keep changing the playing field. One thing rehabilitation is doing, in those areas where it is regulated, is keeping animals out of the hands of the well-meaning but ignorant public. Untrained people have fed cows milk to every mammal, and even birds, or tried to raise baby raptors on hamburger, have smuggled potentially rabid animals into new areas or released imprinted birds or ones not able to recognize their natural food. In many places, licensed rehabilitators have to pass tests, meet continuing education requirements, have their facilities inspected, and have to build those facilities to certain standards.

There are, of course, still good and bad rehabilitators, just as there are good and bad scientists. Gone are the days, for the most part (although I have a few recent horror stories I could share) when scientists would shoot 3,000 broadwing hawks in order to examine their stomach contents; or cut down nest trees to count screech owl eggs. Most science tries to be as non-invasive as possible, I hope. Not all rehabilitators have chosen to invest in their own continuing education and some might be using outdated techniques or inadequate diets. They may not all have the funds for adequate housing and some might be releasing animals before they are ready. Some rehabilitators may not have the ethics to see that non-releasable wild animals have a right to euthanasia (or may let their personal death issues get in the way) and might be keeping animals in captivity that would be better off put to sleep. Some rehabilitators may still deserve the "bunny-hugger" label and might not be capable of taking the steps necessary to keep young animals from habituating or imprinting on humans. These are the cases that get thrown in our face by biologists who object to wildlife rehabilitation.

However, the vast majority of wildlife rehabilitators are active seekers, constantly striving to improve their ability to meet the needs of the animals entrusted to their care through better information, more networking, better diets, better housing and conditioning, better medicines and surgical techniques as more veterinary schools devote class time to wildlife medicine. As the public becomes educated (often by programs presented by rehabilitators), they become more demanding. Most regulatory agencies are finding that the public insists that injured or orphaned wildlife receive care. My only concern is that people causing problems for wildlife (poisons, windows, cats, barbed wire, oil spills) must not be allowed to think their responsibility ends by finding help for the injured; they must also take responsibility for preventing further problems.

In summary, I think wildlife rehabilitation does both quantifiable and non-quantifiable "good." Quantifiable are the numbers of animals helped, suffering eased, the number returned to the wild. Also countable are the number of phone calls -- each one an opportunity to educate the public -- about "nuisance" animals as well as injured or orphaned, many providing a chance to tell people when not to intervene, as well as when it is appropriate. We know how many finders want to be present at a release, but cannot know how saving the life of this one animal impacts the rest of their lives.

We can count the number of people attending educational presentations, but not the number of hearts that have been moved by the true stories we tell, nor the future actions that have changed because of them. We can count the number of dollars raised by a local school for "their" mascot falcon but not the next step that might be taken to start a recycling center at the school, to have a class "adopt" an acre of rainforest, or to have one child go on to study biology or electrical engineering and be instrumental in making power poles and lines safe for raptors. **We cannot count the good that comes from fostering the idea of caring for a living being that you also have the power to destroy.**

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Executive Director Cascades Raptor Center

<http://www.eraptors.org/>

## Rehabbers Prayer

*Give us strength today we pray,  
And light our path along the way.  
Lend our hands Your healing touch,  
For wildones that need us much.  
We ask for hope and courage too.  
Help us know what's best to do.  
You've led them here into our care,  
Please help us ease the pain they bear.  
When weariness invades our souls,  
And sleepless nights take their toll,  
Bathe us with Your healing Light  
And lift us gently with Your might.  
Give us faith to set them free.  
To earth and water, to sky and tree.  
And if You call them back to stay,  
Ease their passage home we pray.*

*- Susan Saliga*

This copy of "Rehabbers Prayer" is complimentary in hopes to help every rehabber in their times of need. This poem is a wonderful example of what wildlife rehabilitators have to deal with many times on a daily basis during the rehab season. Many times we wonder why we do this. We always have to remember the many animals we save and that would not have made it if it was not for the "wildlife rehabilitator". So next time your having a stressful rehab day, please read this poem, I know it will help and that is the reason that I have chose to print this and distribute it for free for all rehabbers to have in hand. I have done this with gracious permission from the writer Susan Saliga and the artist Debbie Mitchell.

This poem and artwork has not been put together for monetary reasons and is not to be sold in any manner

Sincerely, Christina Clark

Owner of Chris's Squirrels and More.

[www.squirrelsandmore.com](http://www.squirrelsandmore.com)



Susan Saliga has been a licensed wildlife rehabber in Southern Wisconsin for 14 years. She specializes in squirrels, which has earned her the local nickname of "Suzie Squirrel". Susan is a technical writer, and enjoys writing prose and poetry as a hobby. Her WI Squirrel Connection Website is [www.wisquirrelrehab.com](http://www.wisquirrelrehab.com)

Debbie Mitchell lives in Santa Monica, CA and is a volunteer with Coast & Canyon Wildlife in Malibu. Debbie operates a small development and hosting company and enjoys illustrating in her spare time.

# So You Want A Pet Raccoon

By: Annette King-Tucker, Animal Rescuer  
Wild Heart Ranch Wildlife Rescue

My favorite of all wild creatures is the intelligent and playful raccoon. I raise and release dozens of orphaned kits each year and at times I have to discourage visitors to my center from wanting to obtain one as a pet. In order to dissuade their urges, I tell them a bit about life with these wonderful animals.

Birth to 3 months, you will be head over heels in love with your kit. They are so much like a human baby in habits, and like fluffy cuddly bear cubs in play. They will adore you and pet you and love you like there is nobody else in the world. You will feed a purring soft body a baby bottle, burp them over your shoulder and cuddle all through the night. You will take your infant around town with you everywhere and make big plans about the raccoon jungle gym you will build in the middle of your living room. You will take a roll of film a day and will put your baby in your will. Nothing foreseen will ever interfere with your immense dedication.

4 to 5 months, your scratches are beginning to heal as you have finally weaned the walking weed-eater. The laceration inside your lip however is infected. Must get that checked. The mattress on your bed has begun to smell funny and you haven't seen your computer mouse in weeks. The jungle gym forgotten, your head begins to plan a really big cage. You want to go purchase the materials for it, but you shelled out your entire paycheck to replace the contents of your mother's purse, which disappeared during her last visit. You think you saw a twenty in the garbage disposal this morning and her lipstick was in your shoe..OPENED. Yet another hole in the carpet. Time to rearrange the furniture, but where were those other two holes at? Oh well. Hit the garage sales and find another chair.

6 to 7 months, you have booted the rotten little beast outside and to get back at you, your raccoon has somehow broken into your car and shredded the seat cushion. To make matters worse, he left you a nice present of something smelly under the seat...somewhere...You try to get to the carwash, but you turn the key to absolutely nothing. Upon inspection under the hood, you search for broken wires...unplugged wires...ANY WIRES...there are no more wires. They are all gone.

At 8 months old your kit hates your living guts unless you have a marshmallow in your hand. You carry them in your pocket so you can get into your house. He waits blatantly on the step for you EVERY DAY and if you forgot your marshmallow, you prepare a tactical plan of entering through the chimney, otherwise, you have the pleasure of sharing your house with a 30 lb nightmare who will torment your every breath.

This is the point when I usually get a phone call from someone who called me months ago to find out what to feed the "precious new baby". I always tell them to keep my number, they will need it in a few months to which they try to convince me they wont. Once I FINALLY get these raccoons, it is a lot of dangerous and tedious work for me to get them fit for release, so PLEASE, leave the raccoons to the experts and get a cat. You will thank me later.

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Annette King-Tucker, Animal Rescuer  
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## Raccoon Native American names

Cheyenne: macho-on, one who makes magic

Dakota Sioux: wee-kah, (wee-chah, wee-kahsah, wici, wicha) one with magic; wee-kah tegalega, magic one with painted face (or wici)

Omaha, Osage, Otoe: mee-kah, (mee-chah, mee-kahsa) same meaning as wee-chah and variants one with magic

Sioux: macca-n-e, one who makes real magic

Yankton Sioux: wayatcha, (same root word as wee-kah)

Dakota-Sioux: weekah tegalega, magic one with painted face

Hopi: shiuua, painted one

Huron-Iroquois: attigbro, blackened (face); gahado-goka-gogosa, masked demon spirit

Mandan: nashi, blackened face and feet

Wyot: cbel'igacocib, one with marked face

Abnaki: asban, one who lifts up things

Algonkin: ah-rah-koon-em, they rub, scrub, scratch

Atakapa: welkol, (wilkol, wulkol, wutko), they rub and scratch

Biloxi-Sioux: atuki, they touch things

Chinook: q' oala's, they scratch

Chippewa: aasebun, aissibun, they pick up things

Choctaw: shauii, graspers

Cree: essebanes, they pick up things

Creek: wutki, they rub and scratch

Delaware: eespan, one who picks up things; wtakalinch, one very clever with its fingers

Lenape: eespan, hespan, they handle things; nachenum, they use hands as a tool

Menomini: aispan, they handle things

Mohican: sha-we, grasper

Natick: asban, they pick up things

Ofo-Sioux: at-cha, one who touches things

Ojibway: aispun, essepan, they pick up things

Seminole: wood-ko, one who rubs

Shawnee: shapata, ethepata, grasper

Takelma: swini, picks up things with hands

Tschimshean: que-o-koo, washes with hands

Yakima: k' alas they scratch

# 2009 The Year That Almost Wasn't

By Susan Dwyer  
Safe Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Director

We have finally put 2009 behind us, thankfully. It was not only a bad year for the economy but for rehabbers as well. The terrible winter and the poor mast crop the fall of 2008 delayed the spring squirrel babies. Everyone was asking "where are all the spring squirrel babies?". Only a handful came into rehab here in CT. Further north they were inundated with baby squirrels while we waited.

The same was true for the baby raccoons as well as most other babies. The babies that did come in were not healthy because of the very wet spring we had. Almost every baby came in with some sort of infection or virus. We watched and waited until about mid June into July. Then the flood gates opened and we had all the babies coming in at the same time.

Most of us still wonder how we got through it, but we did. This winter isn't nearly as bad so far and the mast crops last fall were really good, so it will most likely be an early baby season. The lists are being made and checked as provisions, medications, formulas and other supplies are about to be ordered. The nursery is almost ready. Here's to a new baby season!

## Wish List

By Susan Dwyer  
Safe Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Director

|                      |                                                |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Towels               | Old sheets                                     |
| Washcloths           | Old flannel shirts                             |
| Old white tee shirts | Old blankets                                   |
| Old flannel sheets   | Old quilts                                     |
| Old sheets           | Old fleece                                     |
| Old flannel shirts   | Old pillow cases                               |
| Old blankets         |                                                |
| Towels               | Bags of good quality dry dog food and cat food |
| Washcloths           | Pkgs of paper towels                           |
| Old white tee shirts | Newspapers                                     |
| Old flannel sheets   | Plastic margarine and cool whip containers     |

# End Note

By Susan Dwyer

Safe Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Director

Every time I hear or see something about someone hurting an animal, either domestic or wild, I am thankful for all of you who care enough to save the wild infants, debilitated juveniles and adults and take them to a rehabber so they can get the care they need.

You may not see these babies, juveniles or adults again, but everytime we are up all night for the half hour or hourly feedings you are there with us in spirit. You are also there when we are up all night tending to a critical care patient every few minutes as we do our best to save a life.

I know I don't say it enough, but I am very thankful for all of you who volunteer and support our efforts to save lives. When you are outside and see a squirrel in the trees or a bird flying by or a bunny in the grassy field or all the other wildlife, you may very well be the person who helped save them, so pat yourself on the back for a job well done.

